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ABSTRACT

Decentering, as defined by Jean Piaget, occurs when the mind considers and coordinates experience from more than one perspective. Focusing on decentering in two parts of the writing process--discovery and audience awareness--a study examined the relationship between the personal and impersonal decentering abilities of college freshmen and their overall writing abilities. Subjects, 60 college freshmen enrolled in four composition classes at a midwestern state university, prepared three short essays designed to measure the two decentering traits, and a longer essay designed to measure overall writing effectiveness as well as decentering ability. Results indicated that writers who rate high in overall writing ability usually possess strong personal and impersonal decentering abilities, and vice versa. Analyses also showed that personal and impersonal decentering skills occurred together in the same writing task. In addition, findings indicated that both personal and impersonal decentering abilities did not remain constant across all writing tasks and that personal decentering ability is likely to change as writing topics change. Finally, results indicated a high correlation between audience awareness and overall writing effectiveness across all writing tasks. The study suggests that personal and impersonal decentering are important activities in the writing process and that development of decentering abilities may facilitate development of overall writing ability. (Twenty-six references are included. Four appendixes contain the prompt for part one writing samples and the scoring guide to measure insight discovery, audience awareness, and overall writing effectiveness. Sample responses and analyses for each scoring guide are included.) (JD)

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DECENTERING: ITS PLACE IN THE WRITING PROCESS

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Decentering: Its Place in the Writing Process

Abstract. This study analyzed correlations between freshmen writers abilities to decenter in order to discover insights and to consider an audience s perspective and their overall writing ability. The data was three short writing samples designed and scored to measure the two decentering traits and a longer essay scored to measure overall writing effectiveness as well as decentering ability. The results indicated that there is a high correlation between audience awareness and overall writing effectiveness across all writing tasks. They indicated a high correlation between insight discovery and overall writing effectiveness in the same writing task but not across all writing tasks. The data also indicated high correlation between insight discovery and audience awareness in the same writing task. Finally, results also pointed to decentering abilities in writing fluctuating from task to task.

Decentering: Its Place in the Writing Process

Abstract.

This study investigates decentering as a mental activity involved in the writing process of college freshman writers. Writing is defined as writing with communication as its primary purpose, as distinguished from expressive and poetic purposes. According to Richard Young et al. writing to communicate has as its goal "some sort of cooperative activity" between the writer and reader, motivated by a "desire to eliminate or at least modify ...differences" between viewpoints of the reader and the writer (172). Decentering, a term Jean Piaget created for his research in child development, occurs when the mind considers and coordinates experience from more than one perspective or point of view. The mind "de-centers" or moves its own personal perspective out of center in order to hold simultaneously one or more other perspectives beside it. This empirical study examines decentering skills of college freshmen by comparing their performance on written exercises designed to measure decentering ability to their performance on an essay designed to meaure overall writing ability. This study focuses particularly on decentering in the two parts of the writing process generally termed discovery and audience awareness.

Introduction

To provide a larger context for looking at decentering as a specific function of the writing process, I first present current theory on the natural state of the human mind. Second, I discuss decentering as a developing intellectual activity essential both to overall intellectual development and to the specific writing development of college freshmen. Finally, I explain and justify the particular focus of this study in light of this larger

context.

The life process is a "molding, forming... reaching out, moving toward, seeking to affect others" (May 109). Its essential qualities are constant mental activity and outreach toward something outside itself. These two qualities are so essential that if they are not present, life stops. George Borden termed this outreach "anticipation" and qualifies it as "the core activity for a growing mind," characterizing the "nature of life" (88). This continually dynamic outreach is what Kenneth Burke called "dancing of an attitude... [which is] a potential action waiting for an activating situation" (qtd in Coe 232). One of the underlying questions, then, of any study of the mind will be, "What causes this activation of mental performance? Thus, motive (the "stimulus...causing a person to act," Webster's 9th) will be an important issue in this study.

The stimulus causing a person's need or desire to communicate comes from an awareness of "others" who are "not ourselves" (Burke's division principle, 21-22) with whom we want to "share meaning" (Borden, Stone 73) and thus bridge the "estrangement" caused by the distinctness of our perspective of the world from that of others. This awareness of others develops in the human child and becomes the basis of human communication and thus relationships.

Infants begin life with no awareness of an "other," explained Piaget. They have no concept of self and thus no concept of an other separate from self. The self is totally merged with an environment of which it is the center. Piaget called this stage of viewing the world as merged with self total "egocentrism." During the following stage of development, infants come to understand that they are separate from and have a relationship with the elements of their environment. Now, they can view their surroundings from their own perspective, but they do not yet understand that others can have viewpoints different from theirs. Thus, they do not yet have a concept of

"others who are not themselves" and also have no motive to share meaning.

Athough there is disagreement among theories of child development as to just when stages of development occur, there is agreement that human minds need others to develop the sense of self which reciprocally results in a sense of others. Borden and Stone explained the progression as beginning with "recognition" feedback which the child receives from others. Without feedback, stated Borden and Stone, "our view of reality would be completely egocentric and we would have no ability [also no motivation] to communicate with others." As involvement with others intensifies (through stages they call "acceptance, attachment, and understanding"), "mutual sharing" or communication increases, and a sense of self develops (78-80, 82-3). Robert Selman explained the end result of this reciprocal development as the ability to put "oneself in another's position and the subsequent consideration of one's own action from that alternative position ...[which] allows for the recognition of the existence of a self" (24).

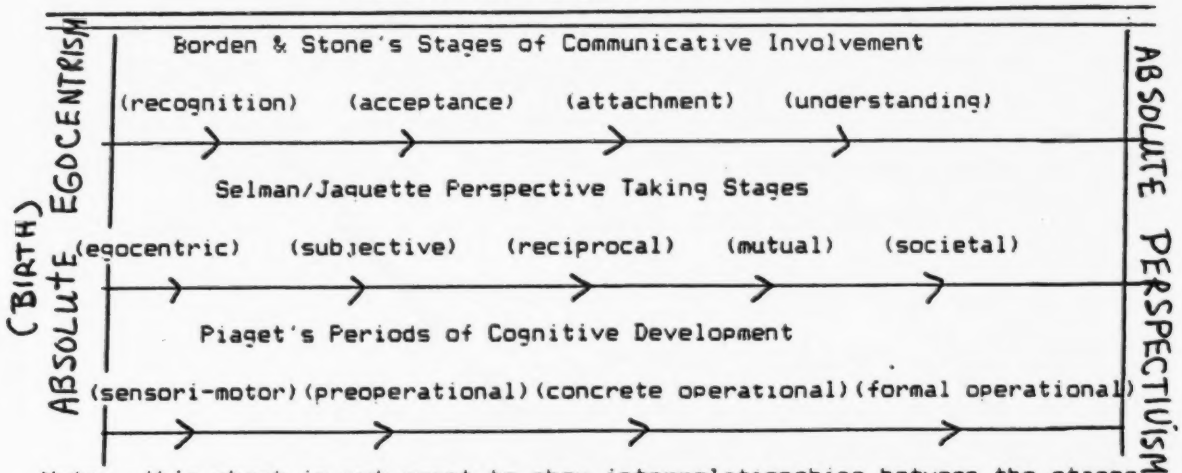
The development of perspective-taking ability, or of putting oneself in another's position and then considering that position, was explained as a sequence of developmental stages by Robert Selman and Dan Jaquette (1977). The first is Stage 0 (egocentric or undifferentiated perspectives) where children are interested in "the uniqueness of the covert, psychological life of each person"; Stage 1 (subjective or differentiated perspectives) where children realize that self and others may have different perspectives but "can't accurately judge what the other perspectives may be"; Stage 2 (self reflective or reciprocal perspectives) where subjects can "put themselves in the other's shoes and see the self as a subject to other"; Stage 3 (third person or mutual perspectives) where subjects can abstractly step outside of an interpersonal interaction and coordinate simultaneously the perspectives of

each party in the interaction: and Stage 4 (societal or in-depth perspectives) where subjects conceptualize "subjective perspectives of persons toward one another" at various levels of communication and as part of "networks or systems" of perspectives (274). The ability to conceptualize self and other and then reflect on the conceptualizations in order to coordinate them is the decentering skill performed in writing.

Egocentrism--Perspectivism Continuum: The growth from egocentrism toward perspectivism, defined by Selman and Jaquette as "the developing awareness of the relation between self's and others' understanding of each other's point of view" (273), can be viewed as growth along a developmental continuum. Movement along the continuum is activated by performing the mental activity of decentering. At the extreme left of the continuum is absolute egocentrism. To the far right is absolute perspectivism.

FIGURE I

EGOCENTRISM--PERSPECTIVISM SPECTRUM



Note: this chart is not meant to show interrelationships between the stages of the three different models, but rather show that each progresses along the same continuum.

Underlying the sequential stages of the Selman/Jaquette model is Piaget's model of cognitive development. His model begins with the sensori-motor

period where self and its physical environment are explored through egocentric physical play. The pre-operational period parallels the Selman/Jaquette subjective-perspective stage. Here, children develop the ability to pretend, to role play and to learn the symbol system of language. Piaget's concrete operational period includes the reciprocal-perspectives stage where the increased ability to consider others' thoughts and feelings develops. Piaget s final period of formal operations involves propositional or hypothetical mental operations. This level of intellectual operations allows for societal perspective taking where the ability to abstract perspectives into concept "systems" is present.

As each individual develops cognitively, he or she is somewhere on the continuum between absolute egocentrism and absolute perspectivism. The move from left to right occurs as decentering occurs. However, the progression is not a steadily plodding one toward perfect perspectivism, but rather it is often a matter of two steps forward and one steps backward or even one step forward and two steps backwards. Margaret Donaldson, in her book Children's Minds, claimed that "we are all egocentric through the whole of our lives in some situations and very well able to decenter in others" (25). For example, an emotional attachment to the issues involved in a situation can inhibit the ability to consider other perspectives. Other factors influencing this fluctuation in decentering ability will be discussed in the next section.

Despite fluctuations, though, it is decentering which moves us along the continuum from egocentrism to perspectivism, which occurs when we are aware of the borders delineating perspectives. Practicing decentering increases the capacity for seeing, or being aware of, borders between self and others or, more precisely, between our perspectives of self and of others. As decentering increases, learning can progress. Piaget called this "progress

of knowledge ...a perpetual reformulation of previous points of view" (qtd in Foster 12).

It is important to note that, although Piaget's first three stages are universal, arrived at by all adults, the final stage of formal operational thinking is not (Inhelder and Piaget 1958; Cowan 1978; Capon and Kuhn 1979). Formal operational thinking and societal perspective-taking skills are developed through "appropriate experience" which requires it (Levin 181). It is this last level of cognitive development which is required for the high level decentering necessary in college writing.

The Inability to Decenter Among College Freshmen: Cognitive psychology research has indicated that college freshmen do have difficulty decentering. The research has also shown that their inability to decenter is a significant impediment to the development of their mental growth. Major models of cognitive development, all based on Piaget's developmental model, have pointed out this lack of decentering while they have also stressed the importance of practicing decentering at the college-age developmental stage.

Douglas Heath, in his "model of maturity," stated that the average college freshman is entering the "allocentric phase," quite far to the left on the egocentrism--perspectivism continuum. He stated that a freshman, in order to be in this phase, must make the "discovery that others do not see precisely as she sees." Freshmen are still developing that "capacity to stand outside self and look at the world through others' eyes" (8). Another model, William Perry's model for "intellectual and ethical development" of college students put most college freshmen in the "dualistic" stage, where all knowledge is absolute rather than relative. For a dualist, authorities would never disagree because there is only one, clear-cut, "right" answer to any given question, only one perspective which is the "right" perspective. Thus, the dualist's energies are directed toward getting the one right answer from

authorities. Until the dualist accepts the relativity and subjectivity of knowledge and thus the possibility of many "right" perspectives, he will have little motivation to perform the mental activity of decentering which would propel him forward along the developmental continuum.

Lawrence Kohlberg developed a "model of moral development" (1958) in which he characterized the predominant mode of moral thinking among college students in terms similar to Perry's dualism. He explained the stage in terms of the Selman/Jaquette societal perspective-taking level. "Roletaking with individuals beyond one's group [one's group being those with whom common loyalties are shared] shows limited development, but the inability to take the role of groups different than one's own is marked. Their world views are likely to be assimilated to one's own" (327). Taking the role of a group involves coordinating a perspective of a concept and thus requires a formal operational level of decentering. This is what college freshmen have trouble with.

All three models, then, stress the decentering ability as central to cognitive development at this age. They also stress that freshmen do not practice the skills involved in formal operational decentering which would develop their mental growth.

Yet, it appears that at least some college freshmen possess high levels of decentering skills. Selman stated that decentering is performed at a high level of abstraction and thus high degree of complexity by some individuals in adolescence (27). Donaldson's fluctuation theory explained this discrepancy. It is the "nature of the situation" which helps to determine the ability to decenter (25). Selman and Jaquette also discussed the "variability [in perspective-taking levels] when either context or content are manipulated" (286). They also stated that "individuals who have achieved a given stage of

reasoning still use a lower level under particular conditions" (278). The conditions in this study are those of the college academic environment, an environment which presents freshmen with special problems which make decentering especially difficult.

One problem is the unfamiliarity of the situation. For many freshmen, college means living away from parents, home town, and longtime friends for the first time in their lives and adapting to a new environment of dormitory life and managing their time and space without parental supervision. Both Perry and Heath discussed the tendency to regress to earlier developmental stages in unfamiliar environments and while performing unfamiliar tasks. Barry Kroll discussed this regression toward egocentrism specifically in college freshmen writers and also explained the regression as "situational" to the college environment: "a result of the inexperienced writer's attempt to communicate in an unfamiliar medium and unfamiliar context" (182).

A second factor making decentering difficult is the greater cognitive demands being placed on the young adult's mind by the college environment than those made previously by his home and high school environments. In college,

> ...the decentering operation ceases to involve only the the ability to split one's attention among competing physicalistic dimensions and begins to require some sort of balanced decentering on elements which are, themselves, inferences or operations. [Students must] take the products of [their] own earlier conceptual efforts as elements in a higher-order inference process. (Chandler 121)

Piaget clearly stated that the acquisition of this higher-order level of decentering, the heart of formal operational thinking, is <u>not</u> automatic. James Moffett and Jerome Harste believe that the capacity is already present, but to develop, it must be <u>exercised</u> and become a conscious act (Moffett 28). In either case, student must interact in an environment which demands exercise

in decentering. For many freshmen, college is their first experience coping with this demand for higher-order thinking skills. The college writing class is particularly demanding. When students interact within this demanding and unfamiliar context, they "experience great difficulty in negotiating the move from concrete and immediate to more abstract and universal writing, a difficulty suggesting that they may be struggling to achieve a new stage of cognitive development" (Hays 128). For further mental development in this college situation, then, decentering is both difficult and essential.

Limiting the Focus: Decentering in the Writing Process: To clarify my definition of decentering as it occurs during writing, I go to Moffett's discussion of abstraction in Teaching the Universe of Discourse. His book was very influential in helping me to see thinking in writing terms of the movement of a decentering process, so I go back to it now to lay his perspective of abstracting in alongside my perspective of decentering. He calls his theories "a set of variations on the theme of decentering" (57); I can just as easily call my theories a set of variations of the theme of abstracting. Abstracting is "symbolizing raw phenomena" (25). Symbolizations becomes one's "set of abstractions" of a particular experience or, in other words, one's persective of that experience. Thus, abstracting is the process of making perspectives. Decentering is the process of connecting the perspectives. As soon as I write this, I must also write that it is not a true picture of Moffett's ideas. He talks of both getting/making perspectives and of using/connecting perspectives. But I see the main thrust of his discussion as explaining how perspectives of meaning are made, that is, abstracted, and then discovering developmental levels of that process. The thrust of my discussion is on the process that, in a sense, occurs after his new "set of abstractions" is formed. Decentering moves sets of abstractions

around. connects them. coordinates them with other sets of abstractions. To the extent that a thing must be made before it can be operated on. the above sequence is a valid one. But because the movement informs and modifies the thing moved. the two processes must also be said to be simultaneous.

Decentering. then. is not making perspectives. It is the process by which they can be used. It is the moving. connecting. interrelating. webbing process. Thus. decentering goes hand in hand with Moffett's abstracting process. For example. as I sit here and write this. my perceptions take in the string of Christmas lights hung along the ceiling of this restaurant, some blinking and some not blinking. My mind abstracts, making symbolizations from this phenomena through an intricate process of selection and arranging which Moffett describes. I can now have thoughts comprised of symbols. both conscious and unconscious, but forming my present perspective of my environment. I think of past blinking Christmas lights I have seen. That thought (set of abstractions) lies beside my first thought of what lies before in this retaurant: my mind has moved the first thought over to make room for the second. I think also of the rhythm the blinking makes (thought three alongside thought one). I think also that when some of the lights blink off, it looks as if there no lights on that stretch of ceiling (thought four is connected alongside thought one). I think of past Christmas trees (thought five). For seconds at a time, the patterns of their lights change, this section of the tree unlit, then this one unlit and the first one lit again (thought six). Sometimes the symmetry was beautiful, sometimes not (thought seven laid beside thought six). Sometimes the lights here in front of me look unattractive -- if I look quickly and then look away, making my judgement. (thought eight beside thought seven, six, five). I do this same kind of quick looking with people! I look too quickly. I look when some of the beautiful parts of a person may not be "lit up" and then look away, judging that what I

saw was unattractive. THe fault was in my looking, not in the person's beauty! (thought nine pushed forward out of the connected thoughts behind it to come to to a tentative rest). It is this running symbolizations around, moving them over, pushing one forward, forming Anne Berthoff's "web" for meaning making that is decentering. And this occurs simultaneously with abstracting, memory retrieval, perception, and so on and so forth. This picture of my thoughts on Christmas tree lights in a restaurant is of course not entirelyaccurate and certainly not empirically provable. However, it serves as an analogy to the processes of abstracting and decentering. The distinction I make between the two hopefully informs Moffett's discussion of abstraction and further distinguishes decentering as a specific function in an integrated web of simultaneous activities making up the writing process.

The focus of this study is on decentering as it relates to two specific areas of the writing process: audience awareness and insight discovery. Piaget used decentering as a term to describe a mental activity involved in the socialization process, the activity of seeing others' viewpoints and coordinating them with one's own. Decentering has been widely used as a valid term by composition theorists in the area of audience awareness by the cognitive developmentalists, since the self-other distinction is clear in the relationship between reader and writer in writing. Thus, no justification is needed for this study's use of the term decentering in audience awareness. However, decentering is equally as valid a term in the process of insight discovery in writing. Even Piaget stated decentering is "far more general and fundamental to knowledge in all its form" than only a function in process of socialization development ("Theory" 710).

Coordinating perspectives of experience to reach an insight is decentering just as much as is coordinating perspectives of "others" for

audience awareness. I use Moffett again to clarify this point. He suggested that any thinking process involves an internalization of self taking on the "roles and attitudes of others and addressing oneself internally as one would address another externally" (67). Manipulating symbols to form "sets of abstractions," is an identical process in either "abstracting from" (turning experience into thoughts) or "abstracting for" (turning an "other" into thoughts). They are "merely two aspects of the same process" (31,32). Both start with "transforming matter into mind" (18), what Frank Smith called constructing mental images from "incoming neural activity" (26). In either process, the sets of mental images are equally fit for decentering, and decentering works the same during either process.

Insight Discovery and Audience Awareness in Models of the Writing Process: To look at the emphasis given to decentering as part of both insight discovery and audience awareness currently in writing theory, I go to current models of the writing process. James Britton, Flower-Hayes, Young-Becker-Pike, James Moffett, Kenneth Burke, Janice Lauer, and others have built their models around Piaget's theory of intellectual growth. All of them agree that decentering leading to insight discovery and audience awareness is an essential cognitive skill in their process models. I use the Janice Lauer and the Young-Becker-Pike models as examples.

Lauer's first stage in her writing model starts with an "exigency,... a sense of dissonance, an urgency to know something unknown" which becomes a "personal quest for insight,... a new understanding of the subject under scrutiny" (56,59). Lauer suggested that the way to discover this insight is to explore the subject from various perspectives (57-59). Like Lauer's, the model of Young, Becker and Pike in Rhetoric: Discovery and Change starts with an "uneasiness" or exigency to find an unknown solution to a problem. This exigency they followed with "conscious probing of the problem," which is

accomplished by exploring "varying perspectives." Both models discussed the importance of a working period for the unconscious mind (Young et al call this the "incubation period") which is followed by the "sudden intuition" or "significant insight" of an "illumination stage" (73-74).

Both of these models describe a sense of dissonance or exigency which creates a desire to resolve dissonance. This dissonance arises through an awareness of a distinctness between perspectives. Both models describe insight as coming after an exploration of multiple perspectives. Decentering, then, both participates in the creation of the exigency as well as becomes a means of responding to that exigency.

In both the Lauer and the Young-Becker-Pike models, the goal of audience awareness is "to spot possible bridges of communication" (Lauer 60). Since the goal of communication is to engage in cooperative activity with the reader in order to "share with the reader some unshared experience, it follows that the writer must know who his reader is, for the notion of sharing implies sharing with someone" (Young et al 58). Young et al explained the importance of decentering in preparing for this sharing.

> In preparing for his attempt to share what is unshared, the writer must work at understanding the reader and the knowledge and the perspectives that the reader is likely to bring to the encounter. If he fails to understand, he may miss the mark. But it is equally important that he understand himself and articulate to himself the set of perspectives from which he views the situation. Both kinds of understanding are necessary if he is to evaluate the whole accurately. (225)

Writing with a developed audience awareness means seeing possible audience viewpoints alongside one's own viewpoint, considering their pertinence to the

particular writing problem, and then writing to accommodate that pertinence. Accommodating one's writing for one's audience is impossible without the ability to decenter.

In the Lauer and Young-Becker-Pike models, decentering is central to the total writing task. In considering these two writing models alongside the previously discussed cognitive models, it appears that development of decentering ability in college freshmen is an issue of significant concern. The question I wish to investigate is this: what can be further discovered about the specific relationship between the ability to decenter and the ability to write effectively?

Personal and Impersonal Decentering: In order to come to terms with this question, I chose to look at decentering as it relates to insight discovery and audience awareness in writing because I see them as two categories which can actually encompass all decentering activity. I suggest that a legitimate method of categorizing the activities of any continually dynamic process is by motives. Since the natural state of the mind is that of "potential action waiting for activation," the mind is in continual pursuit of motives to activate itself. In the earlier discussion of cognitive development, I demonstrated that actual performance of decentering is essential for intellectual growth to occur. Thus, if decentering must be activated for growth to take place, then the activator also becomes essential. Looking at the activators, or motives, of decentering may be a way of understanding the activity more fully.

I propose that there are two main motives which activate decentering during the process of writing. The first motive is the discovery of insight. Here, decentering is motivated by a desire to push the mind forward to reach a new, personal perspective. The mind holds its current perspective alongside other perspectives and connects them to create a new, personal persective. This

category of decentering, which has as its motive discovery of a new perspective for oneself. I call *personal decentering*.

The second motive for decentering is audience awareness. Here, decentering is motivated by a desire to become aware of "calling up a sense of reader's needs and expectations" as Perl defined audience awareness (309). The mind holds its own perspective alongside a reader's to "see differences" and thus find shared bridges. This second category of decentering I call *impersonal decentering*. Personal and impersonal decentering can occur in partnership with each other, often throughout the entire writing process, the first creating the content for the writer and the second creating a sense of how best to share that content with others, and each informing the other. They both engage the activation of the same mental activity; their difference lies in their motives.

The purpose of this study, then, is to investigate personal and impersonal decentering and their relationship to the overall writing process.

Research Methodology

This study examines the following question: what is the relationship between the personal and impersonal decentering abilities of college freshmen and their overall writing abilities? In order to explore the nature of this relationship, I collected writing samples from college freshmen specifically to measure their abilities in personal and impersonal decentering. A second set of writing samples was collected to measure their overall writing abilities. I then compared the scores on these samples to determine what the nature of this relationship is between these students' abilities in personal and impersonal decentering and in overall writing effectiveness.

Subjects: The subjects were selected for this study to provide a random sampling of freshmen college writers. They were all enrolled in four composition classes at Illinois State University for the spring semester, 1986. Two of the classes were sections of "Language & Composition I," English 101.10, composed of freshmen taking a college composition class for the first time and testing low on an incoming proficiency essay exam. The remaining two classes were sections of "Language & Composition II," English 145, composed of freshmen taking their second class in college composition. There were sixty subjects in all.

The choice of subject grouping was made 1) to meet the criteria of college freshmen; 2) to meet the criteria of random sampling; and 3) to provide a broad range of writing ability over the total number of sixty subjects which included the highs and lows for a college freshman population. This wider range of writing ability insured a wider spread of scores on the writing samples which would point to more (or less) significant correlations than if all scores were grouped into the middle, and thus a more narrow, range.

Part One: Methodology and Rationale for Writing Samples Measuring

Personal and Impersonal Decentering: During three regular class sessions in the final week of Spring semester, 1986, sixty subjects wrote three separate samples in response to a prompt designed to measure evidence of personal and impersonal decentering abilities (see Appendix A). The prompt was purposely kept open-ended, since formulaic guidelines would tend to solicit formulaic responses (and thus not new perspectives) from the subjects of the study.

Each of the three sessions was held in the subjects' regular composition classrooms. Each lasted fifty minutes and consisted of three parts:

1) The subjects participated in a prearranged "experience" which provided the opportunity to discover an insight;
2) The subjects reached their insights concerning some part of that experience;
3) The subjects wrote about their insights for readers who had not participated in the experience.

The two goals for the subjects, then, were to discover their own insights into the experience they had just participated in and to use the most effective possible means of communicating this discovery in writing to their readers.

Each of the sessions began with an experience which became the subject matter for that writing sample. Each experience provided the following:

1) equal familiarity with the required content for the writing task;
2) an engagement with the content resulting from personal participation in the experience. This means that the subjects formed an initial perspective of the experience due to the fact that they had to have perceived it -- they could not have chosen to ignore it altogether since it happened to them;
3) encouragement of cognitive dissonance necessary for the activation of personal decentering. Once the subjects were necessarily personally

engaged with the content for their writing tasks, the uniqueness of the experience within the context of the writing classroom encouraged disequilibrium resulting in cognitive dissonance, thus inviting personal decentering leading to insight.

After participating in the experience, the second part of the session began, requiring personal decentering. This study agrees with Young et al's premise that an incubation period is an important component of the inquiry stage resulting in insight discovery. Although the time constraints necessary for the controlled research design prohibited either unlimited or lengthy incubation.the second part of the session allowed for a short inquiry stage. The assumption here is that, after the initial engagement with the content for the writing assignment followed by a short inquiry stage, those writers who were skilled at personal decentering would be able to reach an insight in this test situation. Writers who were less skilled at personal decentering would be less likely to discover an insight.

The third part of each session required the subjects to consider how best to write about their insights for an absent audience. Since the instructions did not require writing for a specific audience, the definition here for audience is James Britton's "generalized other" or the "writer's unknown public" ("Abilities" 64-5). This study assumes that the subjects' ability to decenter in order to consider a "generalized other" is a fair representaion of their impersonal decentering abilities. The instructions stated that the goal for structuring their texts for their readers was to strive for quality and simplicity and "to make every word count." The writers were required to perform impersonal decentering to accomplish this. They had to coordinate a reader's perspective with their own in order to choose only those details and words which were crucial to the reader's establishment of the context and subsequent understanding of the information. Failure to give necessary

material or inclusion of associational or superfluous material would indicate a lack of audience awareness.

Since time constraints allowed very little opportunity for revision and impersonal decentering is an important activity during this stage of the writing process, time may again have made a difference for some of the students in their ability to consider and coordinate their audiences' perspectives with their own. However, this was also true of their overall writing ability; therefore, the time constraint factor remained constant between the two types of writing tasks in this study.

Experience One: The experience of Session One began by the leader instructing the subjects to sit in a large circle on the floor of their composition classroom. The subjects were next given instructions for a "rhythm game." In unison, all participants in the circle hit the floor twice; clapped their hands twice; and clicked their fingers twice, once with the left hand and then with the right. The subjects practiced this until the group could continue the sequence in unison for a short time. Then, the final instruction for the game was given. The leader called out her name on the first of the two clicks. On the second click, she called out someone else's name in the circle. Without breaking the rhythm, that person said his or her own name on the first click and called out someone else's name on the second click. That new person named then called out his or her own name on the first click and another player's name on the second. And so on. The object of the game was to keep from breaking the rhythm established by the players for as long as possible. The leader set a goal of getting through the sequence three times, which the group managed to do. The leader then passed around bags of popcorn. The students finished the experience eating and chatting.

This experience met the criteria of uniqueness in its setting of the

writing classroom. It also created intense engagement in an activity. It was not only demanding on the subjects' physical coordination skills but on their social skills, since it provided an unusual group experience where each student's participation was highly visible. In this setting, it was likely that students would be motivated to perform personal decentering to consider their own performance from multiple perspectives during the opportunity for reflection immediately following.

The circle made group interaction highly observable, and seeing their peers participate in this unique situation also invited the subjects to consider others' performances during the reflection period. The experience also encouraged memory stimulation, given the nature of the "game" activity similar to childhood experiences.

Experience Two: Session Two began by the leader dividing the subjects into groups by counting off to construct a collaborative story. Each group then went to a blackboard and was given a piece of chalk. After the leader dictated a different opening phrase for each group, a subject continued by adding one to three words. Then the next subject was handed the chalk and added one to three words and so on, continuing the story until each group member had contributed and the leader said it was time to give the story an ending. When the stories were finished and the subjects all seated, a spokesperson for each group read his or her story aloud.

This experience was significantly different from the first. It insisted on engagement but on a more mental than physical level. This experience also encouraged observation of and then reflection on their own actions and reactions since all of the students had to participate with the results of their actions then being publicly displayed alongside the results of their peers' actions. The high level of group interaction encouraged more levels of social engagement and more activity to observe and therefore also

made it more likely that personal decentering would occur during the following reflection period. The conclusion of the activity, reading the collaborative "stories" aloud, again encouraged either more engagement through commenting, laughter, etc. or more observation of others' behavior with the opportunity for reflection immediately following.

Experience Three: For Session Three, the subjects were asked to sit as a group on the floor in the front of the classroom facing an empty chair. An ISU student entered the classroom announcing that he was the agent for an important singing star who had been away from the singing circuit for awhile and who was making a comeback. He informed the subjects that they must entice this nervous star in to perform for them if they wanted him. He led them in a long chant, "Frankie! Frankie! Frankie!..." until, finally, "Frankie" entered with his guitar imitating an Elvis Presley style of performer. Frankie's agent turned on a recording of crowd noise which became louder and softer at various intervals throughout "Frankie's" performance. Frankie sang one upbeat song, accompanying himself on the guitar, again in the style of Elvis Presley. He then chose a girl from the audience, stated that he wrote the next song for her, and sang a slow love song to the girl. The third experience ended amid clapping and cheering when Frankie and his agent ran out of the room.

This experience was significantly different from the other two and was particularly unusual in the context of the college classroom, thus having the potential of creating strong disequilibrium and a need to resolve the resulting dissonance. This experience gave opportunity for both participation in and observation of an event that was both unusual and yet indicative of many college students' interests. For the same reasons given for the experiences of sessions one and two, this experience also invited personal

decentering.

Method for Evaluating the Data from Part I: Each subject wrote one sample per session, three in all. The 180 writing samples were evaluated by three Illinois State University instructors of composition who had all taught freshman composition courses for at least one year prior to scoring these writing samples.

Each writing sample was scored using two separate scoring guides. Since separate scoring guides permitted the evaluation of the two decentering abilities to be considered separately and allowed for consideration of totalled scores. The samples were scored both on the ability to discover insight and on audience awareness. The scoring guides were created according to the instructions given by Richard Lloyd-Jones for Primary Trait Scoring (44-60).

The scoring guide for the writing samples to measure insight discovery (see Appendix B) begins with a definition of the primary trait. That is followed with a rubric using six rankings. A six-point scale rather than a five-point scale was chosen so that the graders were forced away from a "middle grade" decision. This encouraged a more complete determination of the primary trait score, first, to decide whether an insight was or was not present (the "3" score indicated no real insight; a "4" score showed the first evidence of insight) and then, further, to rank the quality of that insight. A score of "6" represented a genuine discovery and evidence of superior personal decentering skills; a score of "1" on the rubric indicated no second perspective presented and thus the poorest level of personal decentering skills.

In order to further clarify the rubric for the graders, sample responses for each of the six rankings as well as an analysis of criteria for arriving at each ranking was prepared from student samples.

The scoring guide for the writing samples to measure audience awareness (see Appendix C) also used a six-point rubric for the reason given above. The "3" ranking indicated an overall sense of writing for self instead of for a reader as opposed to a "4" ranking which represented an overall sense of writing for a reader. Again, this allowed for staying away from a "middle grade" and making an upper half/lower half determination before a further, more exact distinction was made. The "1" score represented no sense of audience and thus the poorest level of impersonal decentering skills; a "6" indicated an "extraordinary sense of reader needs" with the highest impersonal decentering ability. A list of sample responses and analyses for each ranking followed the audience awareness rubric also completed this scoring guide.

The method of validation for both scoring guides was face validation. Three Illinois State University faculty members, whose specialties are in rhetoric and composition and one of whom is also a testing and measurements specialist, were involved in the creation and the validation process for the rubrics. Adjustments of the instruments continued until agreement was reached that the scoring criteria were indicative of standards for the universe at large.

Part Two: The Essay Writing Samples: During the week following the collection of the decentering writing samples, the subjects wrote an essay to be evaluated on overall writing effectiveness. The subjects were given two hours to complete their essays and wrote in their regular composition classrooms. To insure that the subjects wrote their best, these essays counted as their final exam grade. All subjects were given the topic of "writing" as their assignment. Since all subjects were completing a semester of a composition course, this topic met Lloyd-Jones' criterion for holistic testing that the assignment be "within the legitimate range of knowledge of

the writer" (41). This topic was also chosen to blend in with the other writing tasks the subjects had been doing over the semester so as not to particularly stimulate cognitive dissonance and thus the motive to perform decentering in other than the normal way in which any writing creates that motive. This choice, then, was made so as not to slant the findings of this study toward a higher relationship between decentering ability and overall writing effectiveness.

The prompt indicated no form, mode, purpose, audience or approach so that the students were obligated to create their own rhetorical situation and then make choices based on that. The assumption here is that to create a rhetorical situation with its own appropriate and consistent choices is in itself an important indication of overall writing effectiveness.

The essays were scored holistically for overall writing effectiveness using Charles Cooper's procedures for General Impression Marking. This method of evaluation was chosen for its potential for high rater reliability and its effectiveness in assessing overall writing quality ("Evaluation" 11-12). Two composition instructors from Illinois State University, other than the primary trait scorers, scored the essays for overall writing effectiveness. A third instructor was on call to grade essays with scores which varied more than one point, but since there was only one essay with a two-point spread, the third grader was not used. The graders had taught composition at Illinois State University for at least three years prior to scoring these essays and also had previous training in holistic grading for overall writing effectiveness in previous research studies.

The essays were also scored by the three primary trait graders for rankings on insight discovery and audience awareness, using the same scoring guides as for the Part One writing samples. This was done to provide additional data on the subjects' decentering abilities for further comparison

with their overall writing effectiveness scores and with their scores on the Part One samples.

The rubric for measuring overall writing effectiveness on the essays (see Appendix D) was based on Illinois State University "Grading Standards for English 101." in effect since Spring 1982. One difference in this study's rubric was a split in the "C" grade into the two rankings of "3" and "4" to avoid the overuse of a middle ranking as explained earlier in this chapter. The reasons for basing this study's rubric on ISU's grading standards were that 1) the standards have been tested for the last four years as a rubric for grading the overall writing effectiveness of freshmen at Illinois State University and have proven adequate and 2) the standards were already familiar to the graders, thus making easier training and greater reliability more likely.

This rubric was validated both through previous usage by I.S.U. instructors in their grading of freshman essays for overall writing effectiveness and through face validation. The same three faculty members involved in the validation process of the primary trait rubrics participated in validating this rubric for overall writing effectiveness.

Methodology for Training Sessions for For Primary Trait Scoring: Since the graders were experienced at holistic grading from prior training in other research studies but not at primary trait scoring, the training session began with the explanation that they would be looking for the presence of two particular "traits" in the writing samples and then determining and ranking the degree of the presence of those two traits according to the rubric on each trait. A description of the three experience sessions and the writing assignment was presented. Next followed a read through and discussion of the insight discovery rubric and also the sample responses which included an

analysis of the scoring criteria for each ranking. The graders then scored sets of writing samples for the insight discovery trait until they felt comfortable with the rubric and had achieved high interrater reliability. They then scored the remaining samples for the insight discovery trait.

After the 180 samples were scored for the insight discovery trait, the above training procedure was repeated for the second primary trait, audience awareness, ending with all samples being scored a second time for the audience awareness trait.

A third training session immediately followed the completion of the Part One samples. This session prepared the graders to score the essay samples for both primary traits. The graders reviewed the rubrics, ranked sets of essays for both traits, and discussed the results until they had achieved high reliability. They then scored the remaining essays for both primary traits.

For Overall Writing Effectiveness Scoring: Since the graders who scored for overall writing effectiveness were already familiar with holistic scoring and had been engaged in this task as part of a team of graders for ISU's qualifying exam essays during the same semester, a preliminary discussion of holistic grading was eliminated as unnecessary. The rubric for overall writing effectiveness was presented with the explanation of the similarity with the ISU Grading Standards, with which they were already familiar except for the split in the "C" grade. Discussion followed. The graders ranked sets of essays and discussed the results until interrater reliability was high. They then scored the remaining essays.

Analysis of Data

The results of the scores from the Part One writing samples measuring the primary traits of insight discovery and audience awareness and from the essays measuring overall writing effectiveness as well as insight discovery and audience awareness were investigated in light of the null hypothesis which this study proposes:

There is not a high correlation between the primary trait abilities and overall writing ability. Specifically, this study proposes four null assertions:

A. The scores will not show that those subjects who score high on one or both of the primary traits in the Part One writing samples will also score high on overall writing effectiveness in their essays.

B. The scores will not show that those subjects who score high on one or both of the primary traits in their essays will also score high on overall writing effectiveness in their essays.

C. The scores will not show that those subjects who score low on one or both of the primary traits in the Part One will also score low on overall writing effectiveness in their essays.

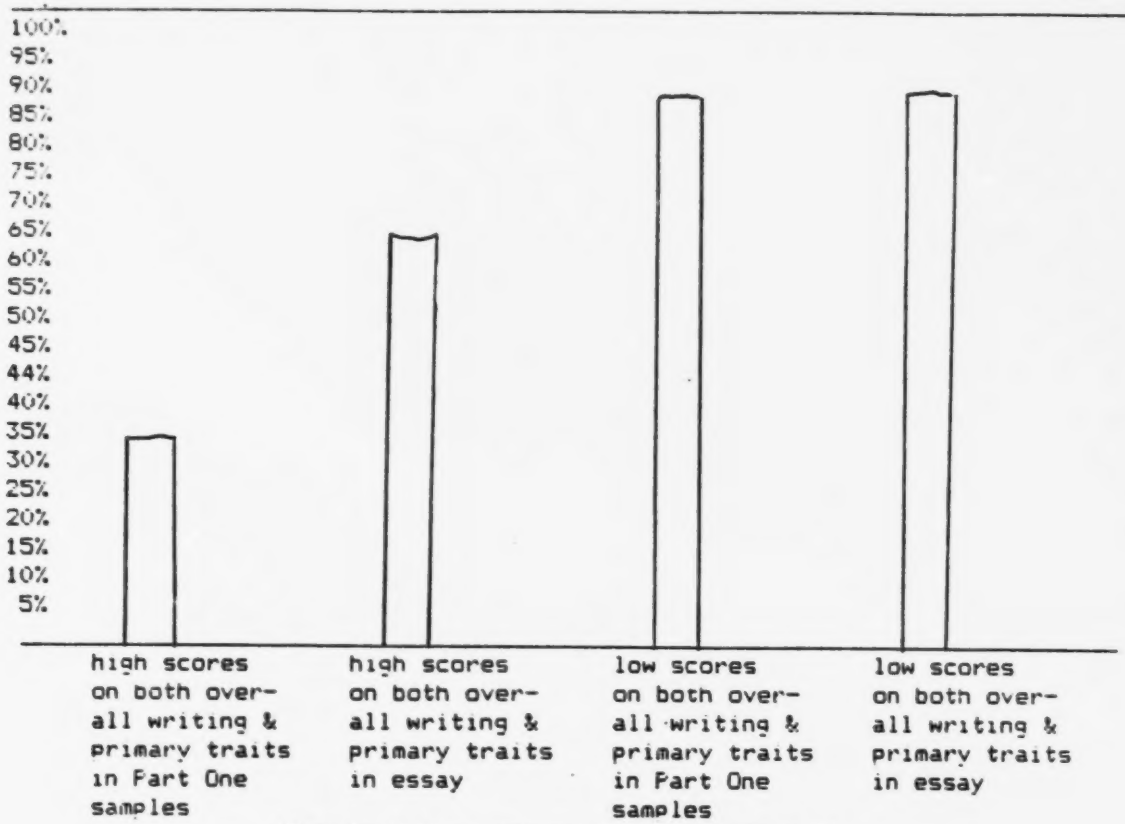
D. The scores will not show that those subjects who score low on one or both of the primary traits in their essays will also score low on overall writing effectivness in their essays.

Results: As a preliminary look at the data, I present the Figure 2 Bar Graph which reports results in the direction of disconfirming three of the four assertions of the null hypothesis. Of the sixty subjects in the study, thirty-nine scored low on overall writing effectiveness. Thirty-three of these low scorers also scored low on one or both primary trait in the Part One samples (85%). Thirty-three of the thirty-nine low scorers also scored low on one or both primary trait in the essays (85%). These scores suggest that

the relationship between decentering and overall writing effectiveness is significant.

FIGURE 2

BAR GRAPH OF PERCENTAGES OF SCORE AGREEMENT BETWEEN OVERALL WRITING EFFECTIVENESS AND PRIMARY TRAITS



(low is 3.5 or under; high is over 3.5)

Twenty-one subjects scored high (higher than 3.5 which in actuality was 4.0 or higher) on overall writing effectiveness. Thirteen of these high scorers also scored high on one or both of the primary traits in the essays (62%), thus also pointing to a contradiction of the null hypothesis. The data concerning Assertion A, however, indicated support of that assertion: seven of the twenty-one high scorers on overall writing effectivenss scored high in one or both of the primary traits in the Part One samples (33%).

Considering the data from this perspective suggests some disconfirmation of three of the four null assertions. looking at the data in another way corroborates this study s hypothesis more strongly. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the sixty subjects had scores which disagreed with the null hypothesis that high and low scores would not match between overall writing effectiveness and primary traits in the Part One samples. Seventy-seven percent (77%) had scores which disagreed with the null hypothesis that high and low scores would not match between overall writing effectiveness and the primary traits in the essays. These figures suggest that. overall. the null hypothesis was disconfirmed by this study.

Rater Reliability Coefficients

Rater reliability coefficients established by intraclass correlations were extremely high in all cases.

TABLE I

INTERRATER RELIABILITY

Graders 1. 2, and 3 -- audience awareness on essay ---------	= .9137
Graders 1, 2, and 3 -- insight discovery on essay ----------	= .9605
Graders 1, 2. and 3 -- audience awareness on Part One samples	= .9625
Graders 1, 2, and 3 -- insight discovery on Part One samples	= .9708
Graders 4 and 5 ------ overall writing effectiveness on essay	= .8761

Correlations between Overall Writing Effectiveness and Primary Traits:

The statistical correlations between overall writing effectiveness and the primary traits of audience awareness and insight discovery used Pearson correlation coefficients. The results are presented in Figure 3.

Both personal decentering (.34, $p < .01$) and impersonal decentering

ability (.32, p <.01) in the essays show significant and low to moderate correlation to overall writing effectiveness. Impersonal decentering ability in the Part One samples also indicates a significant and low to moderate correlation (.26, p <.05) to overall writing effectiveness, thereby following the expected direction of my study. These correlations also corroborate the previous research findings investigated in Chapter Two which, when taken together, indicate the importance of impersonal decentering in the writing process.

FIGURE 3

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN OVERALL WRITING EFFECTIVENESS AND PRIMARY TRAIT SCORES

	OWEM	AUDM	INSM	AUDDM	INSDM
OWEM		.32 **	.34 **	.27*	.12
AUDM			.66 ***	.19	.32 **
INSM				.16	.15
AUDDM					.70 ***
INSDM					

* = significant at p < .05
** = significant at p < .01
*** = significant at p < .001

OWE = overall writing effectiveness mean
AUDM = audience mean on essay
INSM = insight mean on essay
AUDDM = audience mean on Part One samples
INSDM = insight mean on Part One samples

Personal decentering ability in the Part One samples, however, does not show a significant correlation (.12, p <.183) to overall writing ability. The ability to decenter in order to discover an insight from an immediate experience does not show a strong relationship to effective essay writing even though the ability to write insightfully in an essay correlated significantly with the overall writing ability in that same essay. While these results

suggest that insight discovery and overall writing ability have a significant relationship to one another in the same writing sample. these abilities do not necessarily correlate for unrelated writing tasks. In other words, the ability to discover insight in general does not correlate with performance in overall writing ability in general. Thus, good writing will also be insightful writing, but a student who is a generally insightful person, that is, one who has the ability to personally decenter to discover insights from his experience, will not necessarily be a good writer.

The audience awareness trait in both the Part One samples (.25, $p < .05$) and the essays (.32, $p < .01$) shows a significant correlation to overall writing effectiveness. This suggests that the ability to perform impersonal decentering on unrelated pieces of writing, that is, writing in general, does correlate with performance in overall writing ability in general. To compare this with the previous statement about personal decentering, then, effective writing will probably also have audience awareness: however, in addition to the findings of personal decentering, the student who is aware of the "generalized other s" perspective in a variety of experiences is likely to be a good writer. From the viewpoint of teaching writing, this correlation between overall writing ability and impersonal decentering across writing tasks is a particulary significant finding and will be discussed in Chapter 5.

A possible explanation for this distinction may lie in a discussion of motive. This study defines both personal and impersonal decentering in light of their places in the process of written communication. However, although personal decentering is a necessary part of high level written communication, it can also occur entirely apart from any process of communication. The process of personally decentering leading to an insight can be an end in itself and stop with the discovery of the insight--used, therefore, as

personal gratification in no way connected with a motive to continue on and communicate. Thus, it is possible that subjects may have high personal decentering ability developed from the exercise of practicing personal decentering outside of the writing process. It is understandable, then, that these subjects would not necessarily have developed the other skills necessary for writing, creating the discrepancy between their personal decentering and overall writing effectiveness scores.

On the other hand, impersonal decentering, by definition, has as its motive communication and thus could not occur separate from it (although this includes spoken communication too, of course). Thus, if subjects have high impersonal decentering ability, this ability has developed from the exercise of impersonal decentering as part of the communication process. It is understandable, then, that the results of this study indicate that audience awareness correlates significantly with the other skills necessary for writing which would have also developed with the same exercise.

In summary, the results point in the expected direction of this study that students who write well in a specific writing task are likely to perform both personal and impersonal decentering well within the context of that task. While students who perform personal decentering well may or may not write well, students who perform impersonal decentering well also are likely to write well. These results suggest that impersonal decentering, the ability to consider and then coordinate a reader's perspective to one's own, is particularly linked to overall writing ability.

Correlation between Personal and Impersonal Decentering: The highest correlation produced from this research is that between insight discovery and audience awareness in the Part One writing samples (.7033, $p < .001$). The second highest correlation is that between the same traits on the essays (.6642, $p < .001$). These results indicate that when evidence of ability in

personal decentering is present, so is evidence of impersonal decentering and vice versa. Thus, personal and impersonal decentering ability or inability occur together in the same writing task. Since the traits were scored in the Part One samples separate from each other, the likelihood of this strong correlation being the result of a "halo effect" is small. The traits in the essays were scored in the same reading, so the halo effect may have been a factor here.

These results corroborate this study's assertion that decentering is a similar skill whether symbolizations of ideas (for personal decentering) or symbolizations of "others" (for impersonal decentering) are being considered and coordinated.

In addition, these results suggest another hypothesis. Since the difference between personal and impersonal decentering lies in motive and the presence of both decentering activities occur together, it follows that the two different motives must also occur together in the same writing task. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is that the two motives engender each other. That is, the motive to use impersonal decentering leading to audience awareness in a particular writing task fosters the motive which activates personal decentering leading to insight discovery (perhaps for the purpose of having something significant to say to the reader). Or, perhaps what may occur even more frequently, personal decentering which has led to an insight encourages the activation of impersonal decentering so that the discovered insight may be effectively shared with a reader. Whatever the pattern which the interaction takes, it does seem likely that interaction between motives does occur.

Correlation between the Audience Awareness Trait on the Two Writing Tasks and between the Insight Discovery Trait on the Two Writing Tasks: Neither of

the primary traits showed significant correlation between the the two writing tasks. These results indicate that both personal and impersonal decentering abilities differ from writing task to writing task rather than remain constant. This indication of the fluctuation in the ability to perform decentering confirms Margaret Donaldson s assertion that the level of egocentrism (and thus the ability to decenter) depends on the nature of the situation, depending particularly on the "motives and intentions" involved (24) and also the "familiarity" and cognitive complexity of the experience (54). Andrea Lunsford also states that development is "context-dependent" ("Cognitive Studies" 154). To explain these results and confirm this fluctuation theory further, I use the Part One samples. I purposely varied the "natures of the situations" to increase the probability of providing insight-producing content for each subject. The assumption underlying this design was that, despite variation, the mean score on insight discovery among the three samples would still correlate significantly with the overall effectivness mean score. It did not correlate, due to the drastic fluctuation on the scores for the Part One samples. (This is remembering that the reliability among graders was very high and thus not a factor in the fluctuation.)

Table 2 illustrates this fluctuation among the mean scores on insight discovery. Twenty-five of the sixty subjects had extreme variance between two scores (extreme variance was defined as more than 2.0 points). Thus, even though comprehension of the task requirements should have been constant for the three Part One samples, personal decentering ability scores differed markedly for twenty-five subjects.

Fourteen subjects had an extreme variance between the two writing tasks, that is, between the essay and one or more of the Part One samples; however, sixteen subjects had extreme score variance betweeen two or more of the Part

One samples. Therefore, while the weak correlation was partially the result of the relationship between performance on the two separate types of writing tasks, more importantly, it was the result of the weak correlation among all four writing situations, three of which were identical writing tasks except for the writing topic. Since the only difference among the three Part One writing situations was the topic, each of which was one of the 'experiences' explained in Chapter 3, the change among the natures of the situations was a change in topic. Although the fourteen cases of extreme score variance in personal decentering between the essay and the Part One writing samples could have been influenced by numerous changes in the writing situation, the variance among the Part One samples was only the topic. Considering this fact further calls attention to an important characteristic of personal decentering. The function of personal decentering is exactly that which considers and coordinates multiple perspectives of a topic. It makes sense, then, that a change in this topic would be a change in the nature of the situation which, as Donaldson put it, would alter the level of egocentrism and thus alter the level of decentering readiness. Since the three topics, that is, the experiences, for the three Part One writing samples were purposely different, the results of extreme score variance in insight discovery is predictable in light of Donaldson's theory.

TABLE 2

FLUCTUATION OF MEAN SCORES ON INSIGHT DISCOVERY AMONG THE 4 WRITING SAMPLES

Essay Score	Session 1 Score	Session 2 Score	Session 3 Score
3.00	4.33	2.00	4.00
3.33	4.00	1.67	4.00
2.00	5.00	4.00	2.67

2.00	1.67	5.00	4.33
5.33	4.00	3.00	5.00
2.33	1.67	.	4.00
5.33	2.67	4.00	3.67
2.67	4.33	2.33	6.00
6.00	5.00	4.67	3.33
3.33	4.00	4.00	1.33
3.33	4.00	2.33	4.67
3.00	1.67	4.00	3.00
6.00	6.00	2.33	2.00
4.00	1.00	2.00	1.33
1.33	3.67	4.00	.
4.67	1.00	3.00	2.33
4.67	5.00	6.00	2.00
2.33	3.00	2.00	4.33
1.00	1.33	4.00	2.00
4.00	1.00	2.00	1.00
3.00	4.33	2.33	2.00
3.00	2.00	1.00	4.00
4.00	3.00	1.33	1.67
4.00	2.00	3.67	1.00
2.00	4.00	4.00	1.67

(. = absent for session)
(Extreme variance = 2.0 or more points)

Audience awareness scores also did not show significant correlation between the two tasks. However, the picture here differs importantly from

personal decentering. As seen in Table 3. there were only four cases of extreme variance between two or more of the Part One samples scores as compared to sixteen cases between personal decentering scores. And, compared to these four cases, there were eleven cases of extreme variance in scores between the two writing tasks.

TABLE 3

FLUCTUATION OF MEAN SCORES ON AUDIENCE AWARENESS TRAIT AMONG THE FOUR WRITING SAMPLES

Essay Score	Session 1 Score	Session 2 Score	Session 3 Score
4.67	1.00	2.00	3.00
4.33	2.67	1.00	2.00
4.67	3.00	3.00	1.00
4.00	1.00	1.00	2.00
4.33	2.00	4.00	3.00
4.00	1.67	2.00	2.00
3.33	4.33	2.00	.
4.67	6.00	3.00	2.33
4.00	1.00	4.00	3.67
3.67	1.00	2.00	2.33
3.33	1.00	2.00	2.00
3.67	1.00	1.00	3.00
2.00	4.00	4.00	1.00

(. = absent for session)

An implication in this comparison is that fluctuation of impersonal decentering ability is likely determined more by other differences between writing tasks than topic/content, such as structural and complexity variances.

Since the purpose of impersonal decentering is not to manipulate perspectives of content but instead to manipulate perspectives of readers needs with one s own comprehension needs. the change in the "nature of the situation' relevant to impersonal decentering readiness appears to be less the topic than other factors of tne writing task. In other words. similar writing tasks with variation of topics will likely produce similar levels of audience awareness. Conversely. different writing tasks. varying as to complexity. mode. purpose. length and so on. will likely produce dissimilar levels of audience awareness.

This finding supports research which has found that evidence of audience awareness differs markedly depending on different qualities of writing tasks. For example. Flower and Hayes ("Dynamics") as well as James Britton (Writing Abilities) found that audience awareness differed depending on both purpose and mode. Barry Kroll ("Cognitive Egocentrism") and Ellen Nold ("Revising") found also that variance in complexity of the other demands of the task resulted in fluctuation in impersonal decentering abilities.

In summary. decentering ability varies according to the nature of the writing situation. Further. the exercise of the decentering act is either harder or easier. depending on the situation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, although the findings are by no means conclusive evidence, three hypotheses are suggested by this data. First, writers who rate high in overall writing quality usually possess strong personal and impersonal decentering skills: those who write poorly do not possess strong personal and impersonal decentering skills. Second, personal and impersonal decentering skills occur together in the same writing task. Third. both personal and impersonal decentering abilities do not remain constant across all writing tasks: further, personal decentering ability is likely to change as writing

topics change. These results suggest prior research and this study's assertions, particularly that personal and impersonal decentering are important activities in the writing process. The corollary assertion for educators which the findings of this study suggest is that development of decentering abilities may help development in overall writing ability. In other words, this study suggests that inexperienced writers may develop as writers by developing their decentering skills.

Teaching Implications: What can be done, then, by writing teachers? First, we can base our theory of teaching writing on research showing that there is a natural sequence for the development of these qualities, and we can follow this sequence. It is important, though, to keep in mind Lunsford's warning that this developmental sequence is "recursive and context-dependent" more than linear, starting over again every time a new writing situation is confronted ("Cognitive Studies" 154). We also know that formal operational thinking skills must be exercised to develop. To use this knowledge of developmental sequence and to exercise the formal thinking skills necessary to the improvement of writing skills, we can guide students through tasks which progress sequentially. Students begin with the concrete and then focus inward. Once they begin to look inside their minds, they practice symbolizing and develop an awareness of their using language symbols with increasing complexity. As illustrated by the Egocentrism - Perspectivism Continuum, decentering is one of the primary mental activities which moves learners through learning, implying that decentering exercise should be an essential part of any theory of teaching writing based on a natural sequential approach since developing decentering skills will move students through writing development. And, ironically, writing also develops decentering skills. Richard Larson explained how: through writing, one "learns to anticipate and evaluate the consequences of adopting each rhetorical alternative... and be

aware of the range of options open to him" (628). As a writer learns to be increasingly aware of options, he/she is growing toward perspectivism. The conscious awareness is the key here, awareness of borders between perspectives. Decentering is not the most important activity in the interactive process which is writing; instead, it is one of the activities necessary to the existence of the whole. If any part causes the whole to stop functioning properly, then one may say that all parts are equally important. This is true of writing. However, decentering is unique among the parts. It is the "thread" which allows the other parts to be fastened together into a whole. It makes the interaction possible because it is the connecting activity. Whenever there are two or more thoughts consciously considered as separate from each other, decentering can occur to allow a connection or interaction between them. It is not that the importance of decentering, or its uniqueness, diminishes any other part of the writing process, it is that an awareness of decentering as well as other parts need to be more fully understood. This study looked at decentering in two areas of the writing process to further just such understanding. Much work remains to be done.

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Appendix A

PROMPT FOR PART ONE WRITING SAMPLES

1. You will participate in a simple "experience."

2. You will then consider that experience from different perspectives. In other words, you will think about what you just saw, felt, heard, did, etc. Then, you will work to push your mind to think a brand new thought or come to a new conclusion about some part of that experience. If you do think a brand new thought, you will have discovered an insight.

3. Then, you will explain the insight for readers who did not participate in that experience. Your goal in this writing task is to make your short writing a really special little piece of writing for your readers. Think in terms of quality and simplicity. Make every word count.

Appendix B

SCORING GUIDE TO MEASURE INSIGHT DISCOVERY

Primary Trait #1: Written expression of personal decentering leading to an insight.

The test determines whether writers participating in an "experience" can consider multiple perspectives of that experience and coordinate them in such a way as to discover a new way of viewing some aspect of that experience for themselves and thus come to an insight.

Rubric for Insight Discovery

1. Mere description or retelling of events. No new perspective presented.

2. Sense of received perspective. Conventional response. A barely formed perception with no drawn conclusion.

3. Interesting perceptionbut no new perspective or insight discovered from the perception. Decentering is occurring but no new perspective is discovered.

4. New perspective or insight is present. An insight through a comparison or metaphor, but the reader must infer the complete insight for him/herself. A partially realized insight.

5. Clearly a newly discovered perspective for the writer, but the insight discovered is not as stunning an insight for <u>either</u> the writer or the reader as a ranking of 6.

6. A genuine discovery which is original in comparison to other minds. Truly a new perspective for the writer. Indication of presence of genuine insight is the sense of the writer's involvement with writing about the insight.

SAMPLE RESONSES WITH ANALYSES

<u>Score = 1</u>:

Sample 1: I noticed that a few people I was sitting near, were not wearing socks. No matter what kind of shoes I am wearing. I have to have on a pair of socks.

Sample 2: This class session of Language and Comp 145 was a bit more interesting than the session yesterday. When I approached this 3:00 class for the second out of three times this week. I expected another noninteresting experience. This session was a more creative experience than the previous one. It brought out certain people's sense of humor and creative thought. The groups of eight people were assigned to create a paragraph with a three word maximum given to each person. Most of the short stories were humorous and enjoying, while others were just boring.

ANALYSIS:

Both of these samples are merely telling what the writer observed or perceived as each experienced it. It is description of that subject's "facts" of the event

<u>Score = 2</u>:

Sample 1: Today in class we split up into two sections. We were given a sentence to add more words to, each of us taking turns. It was a basic sentence about a grandmother going into a attic. Instead of keeping the sentance basic after reading it, we blew it out of proportion making it totally unbelievable. I wonder if the same thing happens with governments when they read something, if they blow it out of proportion and almost start a war over it.

Sample 2: Today, once again, we participated in another and final experience. This time one of the guys from my class sang two songs to the group. The person who sang, Ron, is definitely not the shy type. He is normally overbearing, obnoxious, and the class clown. When I found out he was going to sing I figured it was just another one of his cute attempts to suck up to the teacher. However, after listening to his singing effort I changed my mind and decided it was an honest effort. I think this is an example of how we

stereotype people, and that our mind usually changes after certain incidents.

ANALYSIS:

Most of both of these samples are a retelling of events, and then each has a conventional or typical response tacked on. There is no sense of real commitment to the ideas which they are proposing as new perspectives for themselves.

Score = 3:

Sample 1: The women were the leader of the pack. We stepped right in and performed first, while the guys were looking lost and confused. They looked like strayed dogs who could not find their way.

Sample 2: Examining a piece of popcorn. I wonder how a crispy piece of fluff emerges from a single kernel to form a tasty snack. A kernel must contain something quite powerful to cause it to explode like it does with just applying heat. It reminds me of what happens to a firecracker when set off. Except that is not edible like popcorn. What is so powerful, yet small enough to fit into one kernel and edible? How does genetics deal with this process as an everyday occurance?

ANALYSIS:

Both of these are interesting ways of stating their perceptions of the experience, but there is no evidence of a new perspective discovered from the perception. They are exploring, examining, and/or questioning, but they have not found an insight.

Score = 4:

Sample 1: Today in class I was embarressed. My car broke down just before class and I knew I had to get it fixed right away, because after class I had to go home. I was late to class, and in doing this I missed out on the singing the class got to listen to. When I walked in I felt like I was an oddball, the one that is left out. This was a strange feeling for me, because I am out-going and I don't get embarressed easily, but today I knew what it felt like for someone who is shy, and now I understand why they get red. From now on I won't make fun of the people who get embarressed, because I know what it's like now, and I hope it doesn't happen to me again.

Sample 2: The experience in which I participated in today in english class reminds me of when I went to a church camp several years ago. My friends were going and they asked to go so I went with them for the week. What we did today was simalar to what I did back then. We would sit in a circle together and sing songs with a man playing a guitar. The feeling I got back then was the same one I got today, I was very uneasy today because I felt my space was being invaded by a man looking directly at me and expecting me to sing along when I didn't feel comfortable with the atmosphere which I was in. Its a strange feeling and a hard one to describe, but that's how I felt.

ANALYSIS:

Both of these subjects made a new connection and came to a new perspective for

themselves. They made the connection through a comparison, the first writer comparing his/her new feelings of embarrassment with people he had never empathized with before and the second recognizing a comparison of his/her feelings of "space being invaded" during this experience and feelings long ago at a church camp. So, they have both come to an insight, but they are not fully aware of what it is. For both, they have felt a "strange feeling" which is new but one they cannot articulate. The reader must infer the completion of the insight for him/herself. Thus, it is a partially realized new perspective.

Score = 5:

Sample 1: In English class today we all got into a circle and crossed our legs and patted the floor, clapped our hands, and finally snapped our fingers while calling out a fellow classmate s name. The formation of the circle itself created a hesitation from the group as a whole. As the game began everyone patted, clapped and snapped without any errors. However, when it was time to respond with names, some got a little uneasy. I started to observe who the confident people were and who the insecure people were. The insecure kept "flubbing up," probably because they were nervous. I realized the insecure people of the group were missing out on the fun, whereas the confident people joked around and were obviously enjoying the unique class period. I thought how advantageous it is to be a confident person. Life is fun and easy if one is confident.

ANALYSIS:

This sample shows that the writer has found a new connection in his/her ideas out of participating in the experience. But the writing does not suggest a sense of the writer s feeling of fresh surprise at his/her discovery. The insight is not particularly original in comparison to other original ideas. There is no sign of a strong commitment to the importance of the insight from the writer (as compared to the writer with a score of "6"). This writer does not dwell on the discovery and explore it. Instead, he/she makes a shallow comment to conclude.

Score = 6:

Sample 1: I thought it was interesting that the class was asked to sit down on the floor in front of Frankie Sludge, the infamous rock star. I realized that almost any kind of show, concert, or speech requires an audience to sit lower in respect to the performer. Of course that way everyone can see the performer. But there seems to be something more. With a person elevated or above a crowd, he commands attention. He is, literally, looked up to and given acknowledgement, good or bad. I realized that being on stage and receiving positive feedback from many people "subordinate" to you must be pretty intense. Frankie Sludge was positively reinforced w/applause and cheering. Just having an audience sit lower makes the performer feel that much higher, even if he really is not. I wonder if the performers or people like Frankie Sludge would act the same if the audience was physically at the same level. There is a difference between looking up into someone's eyes and looking straight into someone's eyes. Apparently Frankie Sludge had some reason for making the girl kneel down in front of him instead of just letting her stand.

ANALYSIS:

The writer has discovered an insight which is a genuine discovery for him/herself. a new perspective of the experience. There is a sense of commitmentto the discovery which the reader can feel. This writer seems commited to exploring this new idea from different directions to understand it more fully. and so it seems an important discovery to him/her.

Appendix C

SCORING GUIDE TO MEASURE AUDIENCE AWARENESS

Primary Trait #2: written expression of impersonal decentering leading to audience awareness indicated by the choices in construction which meet reader needs.

The test determines whether writers can consider the perspective of an "outsider." one who does not already know or hold their own perspective, in order to see the outsider's communication needs and then coordinate these two perspectives to meet the outsider's (reader's) needs and thus to communicate.

Rubric for Trait #1: Audience Awareness

1. No attempt at writing for a reader. Language is for the purpose of the writer's own reflective process.

2. Some sense of wanting to connect ideas for someone else. Either no strong context given or a significant amount of irrelevant detail or both.

3. More choices made for reader satisfaction, but writing is still writing for self overall. Irrelevant details or lack of necessary context. An attempt at the poetic mode which overshadows the desire to write for a reader may also result in a "3."

4. Overall sense of choices made for reader satisfaction rather than self (beginning with appropriate context, ending with satisfying conclusion with only small problems with context and specificity). An overall sense of "The writer is telling this to a reader for the reader."

5. Sense of a continual leading of "others" in a carefully considered manner.

Choices made to clarify, lead, share. No extra, yet everything needed is there.

6. An extraordinary sense of reader needs. All aspects of writing unified by the desire to communicate with an "other": order of presentation, language and syntax choices, commitment to sharing content, and establishment of a satisfying whole.

WRITING SAMPLE RESPONSES WITH ANALYSES

Score = 1:

Sample 1: It is amazing what people will do for a grade. Sitting among the crowd, I was hoping Ron would not kiss me or sing to me. From Ron's viewpoint I would hope the girl I chose to kiss wouldn't slap me, and the girl I pulled out of the audience, would come willingly. This experience overall made me think of how many things a performer has to think about before, after, and during his performance.

Sample 2: This class session was a bit more interesting than the session yesterday. When I approached this 3:00 class for the second out of three times this week, I expected another noninteresting experience. This session was a more creative experience than the previous one. It brought out certain people's sense of humor and creative thought. The groups of eight people were assigned to create a paragraph with a three word maximum given to each person. Most of the short stories were humorous and enjoying, while others were just boring.

ANALYSIS:

Both of these samples sound like the writers could have been recording their inner thought processes, word for word. There is no attempt at writing for a reader.

Score = 2:

Sample 1: I walked into room 139, as I had done many times before, but I felt a certain curiosity today. I looked around seeing many new faces among the old ones. It was like going to a party finding new friends among the old.

Sample 2: Names of aquaintances don't seem very important to most people. Even after being together and interacting practically everyday, this small group of people only knew one half or less of the other people's names.

ANALYSIS:

Both of these have some sense of wanting to connect ideas for a reader. The first gives some partial, initial context to present the context for an other. The second has an organizational pattern of making a statement and then

offering proof of it, which suggests a desire to arrange for someone else to follow; but, it gives no context in its proof. Both still are close to writing for self.

Score=3:

Sample 1: Today in class I was embarrassed. My car broke down just before class and I knew I had to get to get it fixed right away, because after class I had to go home. I was late to class, and in doing this I missed out on the singing the class got to listen to. When I walked in I felt like I was an oddball the one that is left out. This was a strange feeling for me, because I am out-going and I don't get embarressed easily, but today I knew what it felt like for someone who is shy and now I can understand why they get red. From now on I won't make fun of the people who get embarressed, because I know what its like now, and I hope it doesn't happen to me again.

Sample 2: Half strangers and half friends mixed together in a circle on the floor, and everyone eyeing each other trying to figure out the personality of the new faces. This is the feeling I got at the beginning of English as I sat there in Mrs. Walkers Circle of experiance. But as the experiance began, and we all participated in achieving the goal of keeping a rhythm and saying another person's name along with your own, these impressions and feelings diminished. By the end of the experiance, we were still half stangers and half friends mixed together in a circle, but not total strangers because we had sometning in common. An experiance.

ANALYSIS:

There is more evidence of choices made for a reader, but a still more prevalent sense of writing for self. In the first, the writer gives the reader an overall thesis statement and so is thinking of arranging for a reader. He/she then gives details irrelevant to his point (verbalizing an excuse which was important to <u>self</u> rather than to a reader). He/she then fails to provide needed context in explaining the situation (i.e., what singing?). For the next few sentences, the writer is defining his terms ("oddball, the one that is left out") and explaining for a reader. The last sentence is again centered on self-reflective writing.

In the second sample, the writer is making an attempt at poetic writing, sacrificing reader needs to that. There is some attempt at providing context for a reader, but terms are not well defined, and clarity is sacrificed to vagueness.

Score = 4:

Sample 1. Today, we participated in a writing game. We divided into groups, and each had to write three words, that would make a story when we finished. It seemed everybody pretended to be annoyed with such a "silly" game. When, actually, they enjoyed it. This seems to go back to our society, and how we deal with peer pressure. We don't deal with it; we just succumb to it!

Sample 2. Today in English 145 a male ISU student came in our class and pretended to be a rock star named Frankie Sludge. The pretend rock star sang two songs. While he sang, I began to study the guitar that he played to accompany his songs. In studying this musical instrument I came to realize that wood, wire, and nails is basically what makes a guitar. Funny how these few items, which is really considered junk to me, can make such pleasant

music.

ANALYSIS:

Both samples have an overall sense of choices made for reader satisfaction. Both begin with fairly appropriate context and both end with a satisfying conclusion with only small problems with context and extraneous detail (the first one does not define "we," and the second one adds irrelevant details like "male" and "sang two songs"). There is a continued sense in both of these samples, though, that the writer was aware of writing not for him/herself but instead for an other.

Score = 5:

Sample 1: Today in English 145, we did a project where we were all to write a paragraph together, each adding 3 words at a time. Knowing my classmates rather well, I began to notice that the content of what we all wrote seemed to reflect our personalities. Dave, for example, is very witty and each of his additions to our paragraph were rather humerous. The same was true for other students who are quite, shy, etc.... This made me realize that a person's personality plays a big part in the way a person writes. Therefore instructors should allow students to pick their own topics and subjects to write on and grades will probably be better because students will be writing on what they like or what interests them!

ANALYSIS:

There is a strong sense of the writer leading specific "others" in a carefully considered way. The transitions are tight, there is a sense of explaining for a reader in order to clarify and prove. Only what is needed is there.

Score = 6:

Sample 1: This week in my English class, we are going through experiences. These experiences are just mental excersizes, and after we are finished with each of them, we write down the things we experienced or noticed during these excersizes.

In today's experience, I noticed that when a group of people get together and try to work as a group there very rarely is equal participation from all members. For example, our group was to create a story off of a given beginning. Everyone in the group was to add a maximum of three words to their own. What really happened was that two or three of the six people in our group actually did all of the work. Not by writing the words into the story, but by telling others in the group what to write. It was as if the two or three people were controlling the other three or four as if they were robots by telling them what to do.

ANALYSIS:

There is an overriding sense that communication with a reader is this writer's central concern. His/her arrangement, syntax, and sense of a satisfying whole all point to a commitment to sharing this material with an "other." The first paragraph shows the desire to present needed background information the reader will need to understand the purpose for the writing task. The second paragraph presents a satisfying opening context and a thesis statement,

leads the reader carefully through the proof of the thesis, and provides a satisfying conclusion.

Appendix D
SCORING GUIDE TO MEASURE OVERALL WRITING EFFECTIVENESS

Rubric for Overall Writing Effectiveness

1. The "F" essay: failing

   A. Lacks both a single subject and a controlling idea or purpose.
   B. Lacks content.
   C. Lacks any sense of audience.
   D. Consistently lacks clarity. Lacks cohesion both within sentences and between sentences.
   E. Lacks organization of the whole piece. Inadequate or absent introduction. Absence of transitions. Inadequate or absent conclusion.
   F. Lacks variety in sentence structure. Inaccurate word choice.
   G. Frequent errors in Standard English (in punctuation, grammar, spelling).

2. The "D" essay:

   A. One subject, but lacks a controlling purpose.
   B. Lacks anything but the obvious in content. Repetition of ideas for development.
   C. Lacks sense of appropriate audience.
   D. Lapses in clarity, especially with cohesion between sentences.
   E. Lapses in organization of the whole. Weak introduction, transitions, and/or conclusion.
   F. Lacks variety in sentence structure. Inaccurate word choice.
   G. Some errors in Standard English.

3. The "Low C" essay:

   A. Displays a sense of purpose, but the overall paper does not fulfill it.
   B. Lacks consistent logical progression of ideas. Inadequate development of some points. Rarely thought provoking.
   C. Lacks consistent sense of appropriate audience.
   D. Reasonably clear throughout. Only minor cohesion problems.
   E. Only a few lapses in organization of the whole. Adequate beginning. A few missing needed transitions. Adequate conclusion.
   F. Lacks variety in sentence structure and/or accurate word choice.
   G. Some errors in Standard English.

4. The "High C" essay:

   A. Displays a sense of purpose, and the overall essay does fulfill it.
   B. Logical progression of content. Rarely thought provoking. Reasonable development of main points.
   C. Displays a sense of audience and usually addresses that audience.
   D. Clear throughout.
   E. Organized well enough to be easily readable, with a beginning, middle,

and an end.
F. Adequate but undistinguished sentence structure and word choice. Wordiness often keeps a "4" essay from going up into the "5" ranking.
G. Few errors in Standard English.

5. The "B" essay:

A. A controlling sense of purpose throughout.
B. Exhibits a mature level of thought. Effective development of main points.
C. Tailored for a given audience.
D. Clear throughout.
E. Unified organization. Apt introduction. Effective transitions. Good conclusion.
F. Variety of sentence structure. Accurate word choice.
G. Very few errors in Standard English.

6. The "A" essay:

A. A controlling sense of purpose throughout.
B. Exhibits a mature level of thought. Thorough and fresh development of main points. Truly thought provoking.
C. Tailored for a given audience.
D. Clear throughout.
E. Unified and sometimes creative organization. Apt Introduction. Tight transitions. Vigorous conclusion.
F. Variety of sentence structure. Precise word choice. An assured prose style.
G. Free from serious errors in Standard English.